

# Random Encounters

## All Adrift on the Dune Sea

By Skip Williams



### A Taste of Desert Hospitality

Some time ago, a band of desert nomads was skirting the Dune Sea when they fell afoul of a trio of lamias. After charming a few key members of the band, the lamias led the nomads into the Dune Sea, where they could devour the remainder of the band at their leisure.

When the PCs arrive on the scene, the nomads are camped near a small desert spring. The lamias have used their illusion powers to make the place look like an extensive oasis with groves of palm trees and a pool of clear water. The nomad band has been reduced to a mere eight members, a few camels, and a handful of sheep and goats. Thanks to the lamias' *major image* spells, there appear to be several dozen tents pitched in the grove.

Four charmed nomads serve as sentries for the encampment. The lamias have made sure these people look reasonably clean and well fed. The sentries have orders to greet any strangers warmly and to invite anyone they see into the encampment to enjoy the hospitality of the tribe. The sentries won't take "no" for an answer. If the PCs decline the invitation, the sentries fall into paroxysms of genuine grief. (The lamias have threatened to kill and eat their relatives should they fail to lure in every traveler they see.)

If the PCs accept the invitation, they're led to one of the three genuine tents in the encampment, where they are invited to clean the desert dust off their bodies and sit down to coffee and a meal of dates and roasted goat. During the meal, the lamias, who have remained hidden in the tents, surround the party and loose their spell-like abilities. They start with *mirror image* while still out of sight, then they use *deep slumber* on the toughest-looking fighter type, and *charm monster* on two other characters that seem physically powerful. After that, the lamias move into melee range to use their Wisdom-draining attacks.

After a round or two of melee (and a few Wisdom drains), one lamia tries *deep slumber* on the character who seems the most dangerous, and the other two use *charm monster* again. If the battle goes this long, the sentries come to watch the fray. Thanks to the *charm* effects, the sentries won't help the PCs; they just stand there, slack-jawed, and watch the action. Occasionally one sentry grins when a PC lands a good blow, but only when he or she thinks the lamias aren't looking.

The lamias keep up their attack in the manner described until all their daily uses of *charm monster* and *deep slumber* are gone. If necessary, they refresh their *mirror image* effects. If the lamias haven't defeated the party by the time their offensive spells run out, any survivors flee the encounter.

Once the PCs drive off the lamias, they're free to explore the encampment. It won't take long to discover which portions are illusory. The four nomads that haven't been pressed into sentry duty lie tied up in one of the real tents. They are hungry, thirsty, and very frightened. If any sentries have survived, they'll happily vouch for the PCs.

After the fight, the PCs are invited to a real feast.

**Lamias (3):** hp 58 each; see *Monster Manual* page 165.

### Bringing the Parts Together

The PCs might have gotten a few details about the nomads from Calibmennon, the androsphinx from "Not Exactly a Thorn in His Paw." The normally observant Calibmennon might have noticed there was something amiss in the nomad camp, but he was preoccupied with hunting for giant scorpions at the time.

If the PCs questioned the dead nomads from "Mummies by Moonlight," they should have a better idea of what they're facing at the beginning of the encounter.

If the PCs interrogated the hieracosphinxes from "Birds of a Feather," they also can get clues about what is going on here.

The surviving nomads have seen the androsphinx and the hieracosphinxes, and they know the approximate location of the mummies' ruins (though they don't know there are actually any mummies there). If the PCs have not already played through the first four parts, they might find the nomad's information useful.

